

How can you get a vasectomy?

A vasectomy requires a physical exam and counseling by a qualified doctor or health care provider to do the surgery. If the vasectomy is paid for by federal or state funds, a 30-day waiting period is required. Call your local family planning clinic for information.

Center for Health Training
1809 Seventh Avenue, Suite 400
Seattle, WA 98101-1341
206.447.9538 - p
206.447.9539 - f
seattle@jba-cht.com
www.centerforhealthtraining.org

Reviewed January 2010

Vasectomy: Male Sterilization

How a vasectomy works:

Vasectomy is simple surgery in which the tubes that carry sperm up to the penis are cut and sealed. Vasectomy is considered a permanent (not reversible) method of birth control and should be chosen only if you are sure that you do not want children in the future.

After a vasectomy, you will still produce male hormones and sperm, but the sperm will not be able to join with the other fluids in your ejaculation. When sperm cells aren't used, they die and the body will absorb them. The amount of fluid in your ejaculation is the same, except there are no sperm. Your sex drive, ability to have sex and orgasms do not change because of a vasectomy.



How a vasectomy is done:

The male sterilization procedure is done in a clinic or doctor's office and takes about 30 minutes. A local anesthetic (like dentists use) is injected into the skin of the sack that holds the testicles ("balls"). A small incision (cut) in the skin allows the doctor to cut or remove a piece of each tube. After the tubes are cut, tied, or blocked, the

(continued)

incision is closed. It is normal for you to feel soreness, swelling or bruising for a few days after a vasectomy. It is recommended to not do heavy physical labor for at least 48 hours. You can use an athletic supporter to make this healing time more comfortable. Wait until the cut is healed and you are no longer sore before you have sex.

Since sperm may still be alive in the tubes above the cut, you can not use the vasectomy for birth control until you have had 15-20 ejaculations to clear out all sperm. Several weeks after a vasectomy, you will need to have your semen checked to make sure no sperm are left.

Effectiveness:

A vasectomy is very effective, permanent method of birth-control. In the first year after a vasectomy, one or two couples in 1,000 will have a pregnancy (99.9% effective). Failure happens only rarely, when the tubes were not completely sealed off during surgery or when the tubes grow back together.

A pregnancy may also happen if a couple does not use some other kind of birth control until the follow-up semen test shows that there are no sperm in his ejaculation fluid.

Benefits of a vasectomy:

Sterilization is one of the safest, most effective and most cost-effective contraceptive methods. It is also a very private method, with no need for partner involvement. Some people report an increase in sexual desire because they no longer worry about

unintended pregnancy. Research continues to show that men who have had a vasectomy are not more likely than other men to develop heart disease, cancer, or other illnesses. Vasectomy is safer, simpler, and less expensive than female sterilization.

Potential side effects and disadvantages:

Most problems after vasectomy go away within one or two weeks. Most men can expect minor bleedings under the skin, and some men have swelling, bruising and pain that can be reduced with mild pain medication.

A vasectomy can be expensive if you do not have insurance or financial support. Medicaid and other state funds can pay for the surgery. A vasectomy is considered permanent and irreversible. Even though it is possible with advanced surgery to reconnect the tubes, there is no guarantee this will result in future pregnancy. This reconnection surgery is very expensive and is not covered by Medicaid.

A vasectomy will not give you protection against HIV (AIDS) or sexually transmitted infections (STIs) such as chlamydia, herpes, genital warts (HPV), gonorrhea, hepatitis B and syphilis.

Potential risks:

Some men regret having had a vasectomy, particularly if they are in an unstable relationship, are very young or have no children at the time of the surgery.